

Old Park • St. Lawrence • Isle of Wight

Tropical Bird Park



SOUVENIR GUIDE

The walk-through Aviaries

Tropical Bird Park

OLD PARK · ST. LAWRENCE
Nr. VENTNOR · ISLE OF WIGHT

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OPENING TIMES:

1st April to 31st October
10.00 a.m.–5.00 p.m.
1st November to 31st March
12 noon–4.00 p.m.



The Tropical Bird Park—situated as it is in the southern-most part of the Isle of Wight—enjoys the benefits of a very mild climate. This is brought about partly by the Gulf Stream, which reaches our shores to the south, partly by the three hundred foot high cliffs to the north, and partly by the dense woodland all around. The numerous springs and streams keep the topsoil at a higher than average temperature.

All these factors enable us to keep and rear birds in their near-natural habitat, and to give the visitor a sense of being in sub-tropical surroundings.

When the idea of creating a bird park was first conceived in 1970, the area which it now occupies was the neglected remains of the extensive walled-in gardens belonging to the Old Park Estate, which had stood empty from 1906 until 1947.

The gardens were designed to keep out birds and rabbits, and so to protect the produce grown inside. It was an obvious solution to reverse the idea, and to keep the birds in!

The advantage of the 'walk-through' system is that in the absence of any wires the birds may be seen clearly at close quarters. The birds are quite content with this arrangement, many of them sufficiently so for them to breed.

Toucans

As a fruit-eater, the Toucan's bill has been well adapted to obtain nourishment. Large, strong and canoe-shaped, the brightly coloured bills of Toucans resemble those of Hornbills, another fruit-eater. In the dense tropical forests where they come from, the bills are used to reach fruit on thin branches which would not support the Toucan's weight, and to push through tangled growth in order to reach fruit.



Parrots

Because of their ability to imitate sounds, noises and human speech, parrots make amusing and popular pets. Of the species seen at the park, the African Grey Parrot is the best known. He is capable of imitating the calls of other birds in the wild.



Cockatoos

Cockatoos are related to parrots and macaws, but are distinguishable from them by an impressive crest of feathers which is raised when the birds are excited. They are gregarious birds, which make good pets and can be taught to 'talk'.



Macaws

As giants of the parrot family, these colourful and noisy birds are also popular pets. Their diet consists of monkey nuts, sunflower seeds, maize and fruits. The four species at the park are the Blue and Yellow Macaw, the Scarlet Macaw, the Green-winged Macaw and the Rare Hyacinthine.

The Tropical House



During the winter of 1979, the Tropical House was constructed, and it was officially opened in July 1980, by Sir John Nicholson, Bart., Lord Lieutenant of the Island. This building provides the heat and humidity which the more delicate birds, such as humming birds and tanagers, require for survival, in a rain-forest environment.

During unusually cold weather, this house can also be used as a refuge for other birds.

Also situated here are the kitchen and food stores.

Feeding

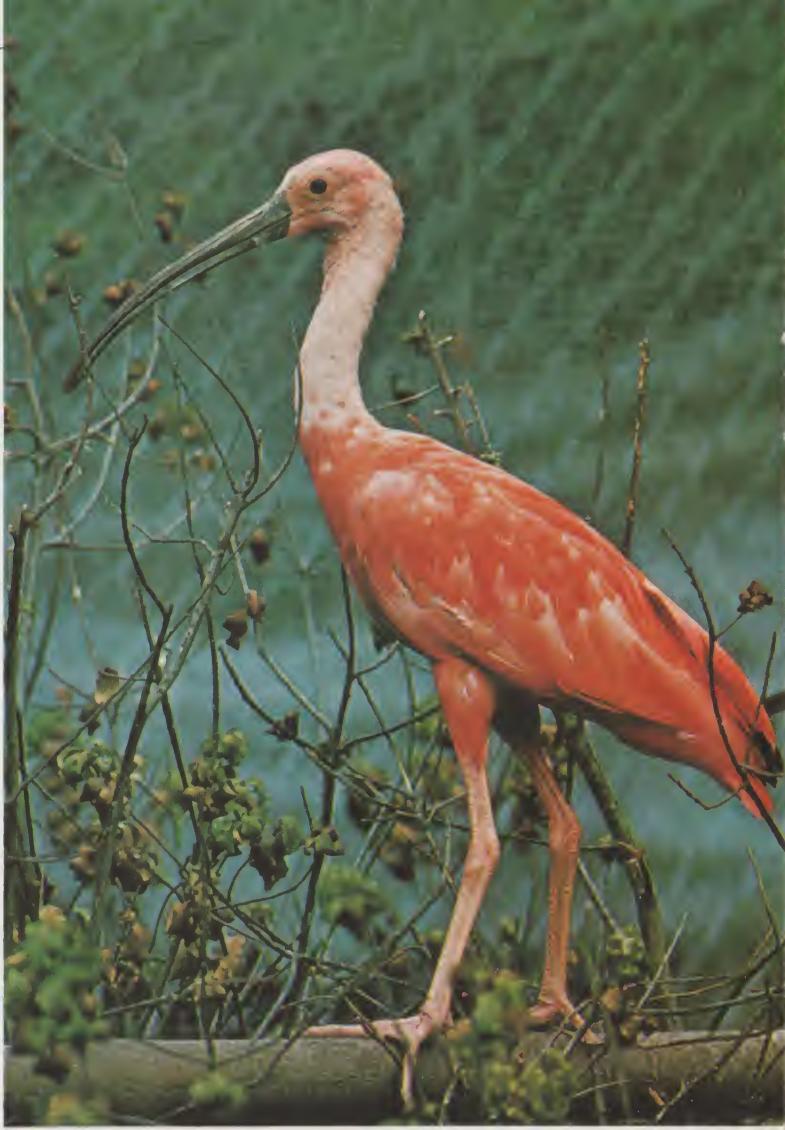
Most of the working day is taken up with cleaning, food preparation and feeding.

The diets for the birds fall into four main categories—those for seed-eaters, fruit-eaters, carnivores and nectar drinkers. A large variety of food is used every day and the following are some of them: Apples, Tomatoes, Bananas, Grapes, Complan, Bemax, Farlene, Glucose, Sugar, Minced and Chopped Meat, Sunflower Seed, Peanuts, Canary Seed and Millet. Sprats are given to the fish-eaters.

Sometimes, concern is expressed about the welfare of birds kept in captivity, but we have proved to ourselves that, providing the aviaries are of a size large enough to allow the birds to exercise and to have some privacy, they are perfectly content.

They also have the advantages of protection from predators, constant food supply, and a veterinary consultant available should illness occur. In fact, birds in captivity live much longer than those in the wild, and this has led to the occurrence of 'old age' problems, such as arthritis.

One day we took a fully grown, but young, cockatoo for a walk around the lake. We soon realised that it was terrified of the open space, having been used to the confines of its aviary, from birth and quickly returned it into 'captivity' in a state of shock. It took several weeks of gradual training before he was happy to be outside.



Touracos

These are also known as 'plantain-eaters', as they subsist largely on plantains and other fruits, plus a few insects and grubs. They are soft-feathered birds, with long tails, pronounced crests and stubby bills.



Storks

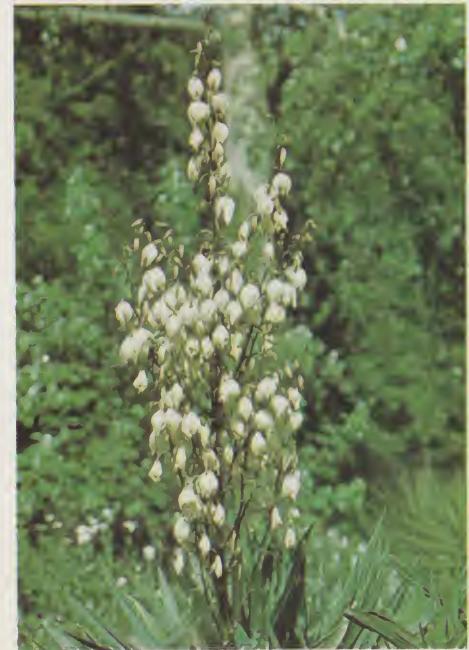
Regarded as a bird of good omen, storks are known to have existed some fifty million years ago. They have long legs and large bills, and are mute, communicating by rattling their bills. They are found in the warmer parts of the world, except in New Zealand, Pacific Islands and Northern North America.

Cranes

There are four species of crane kept in the park—Demoiselle, Sarus, Common and Crowned. The last named are the most spectacular, with their impressive cluster of pale gold plumage on top of their heads.

Spoonbills & Ibis

These are wading birds, belonging to the same family. Spoonbills have a distinct flat bill with a spoon-like tip.



The Woodland Trail



The event of Dutch Elm Disease, and the consequent necessary felling of many trees, meant that this area of woodland could be cleared sufficiently to admit sunlight.

Grass soon began to grow, and a suitable area for parkland birds was created. The two and a half metre high fence keeps out foxes, and the low divisions keep different species apart, and prevent possible fighting.

Here can be found the larger type of bird, most of which walk on the ground; you can see different species of crane and stork, Ibis and Spoonbills and some geese. Some birds are too dangerous to allow the public direct access, among these are the eagles and owls.

With man's 'progress' around the world, many species of bird are now in danger of becoming extinct, and bird parks are therefore extremely keen to encourage breeding.

The Nene or Hawaiian Goose was reduced to about forty birds in about 1970, but, due to the work carried out at Slimbridge, their numbers have increased so that they are now fairly common, and they have been returned to their native land.

The Swinhoe and Mikado Pheasants became extinct in their native Taiwan. The present world stock of many thousands has resulted from four pairs which were kept in captivity in France, in 1860.

The Splendid Parakeet of Australia is virtually extinct in that country, but here in Great Britain many thousands of them are kept privately in garden aviaries.

We are sometimes given birds which have been kept as pets and we always endeavour to find a mate. This can prove very difficult, as it is not always possible to determine the sex of a bird, except by careful study and observation of its behaviour and habits over a fairly long period.

Our breeding successes include Umbrella Cockatoos, Citron-crested Cockatoos, Blue-crowned Conures and Jendaya Conures. Every year the Ring-necked Parakeets, Cockatiels, Lovebirds and Budgerigars produce young. Some years ago we received a grant from the BBC Nationwide *Save our Species* Appeal towards the upkeep of our pair of Snowy Owls, and we were delighted, when, in 1981, they produced two babies.

Owls

Owls are night hunters for which they are well equipped. With their keen eyesight and silent flight, which is made possible by a fringe of flexible filaments on their soft-feathered wings, they can swoop down on rodents and small birds in the darkness. They are highly sensitive to movements and sounds, live among the trees and communicate by hooting.



Eagles

Together with falcons, kites, ospreys and hawks, eagles are day hunters. Like other birds of prey, they have the usual beak and talon characteristics, and, in addition, they have grey or brown plumage and powerful wings. They are capable of soaring to great heights and then diving at high speed to attack their prey. Depending on the species, the diet may range from rodents, hares, small deer, other birds, and even fish.



Flamingo

We have two species of flamingo, the Chilean and the Cuban. These elegant and graceful birds build their nests in shallow water and lay one egg at a time. Their diet consists of fish, water plants and trout pellets which help to retain their colour.



Lakeside Walk

This area is the home of the water-adapted species, ranging from the spectacular pink of the flamingo, to the decorative black of the swans.

The banks have been planted with sub-tropical plants, such as cordylines and yuccas, both of which bear huge plumes of white flowers.

The huge tree near the owls' aviaries is a weeping aspen, very rare in Britain, and is about 350 years old.

Birds vary in their ability to adapt to nature more than any other living creature. Compare the Ostrich, 50-60 lb in weight, and unable to fly, with the humming bird, weighing 1 oz. and able to hover in the air. The jaws of a parrot can bite through a Brazil nut, and the beak of an Ibis can probe nine inches down into the mud.

The mouth of a flamingo can filter gallons of water to extract minute food particles. The talons of an eagle can carry a rabbit or a baby lamb, and the webbed feet of a duck can outswim a fish.

Tropical Bird Park

The most beautiful thing on earth is nature, but nature is not complete without birds. Imagine living in a world without the sound of birds—it would be a silent world indeed.

When you step into the bird park a world of beauty unfolds before your eyes, the music of their singing fills the air and you are in a world of your own where you can relax, free from everyday cares.

The birds in this booklet are to be found in the Tropical Bird Park, where there are housed some of the most beautiful birds in the world. Without the bird park you would have to travel around the world to get a glimpse of these exotic birds.

This souvenir booklet is meant to whet your appetite, it is an invitation to you and your family to come back again and enjoy the beauty and natural colours of these exotic creatures. Indeed the more times you visit the bird park, the better you will enjoy and understand their rare beauty. They are very much a part of our lives.



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